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AUTHOR Neighbor, Jonelle C.
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ABSTRACT

The study looked at differences between groups of children identified as high visibility rejected (HVR) and low visibility rejected (LVR) on a sociometric measure with 952 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. Questionnaires were analyzed to determine the number of positive and negative nominations from peers received by each child. HVR children (N=49) received many nominations, with the number of negative nominations outweighing the number of positive nominations, while LVR children (N=50) received few nominations, with negative nominations also outweighing positive nominations. Parents and teachers also rated the students in each group on specific social skills and general behavior problems and the identified children also rated themselves. The major finding was that HVR children were generally rated as having poorer social skills, more conduct problems, and more withdrawal than LVR children who were rated as having more social and behavioral problems than a comparison group. Other findings included that both groups of rejected children often preferred to do activities alone or with an adult rather than with same age peers, in contrast to comparison children who more often preferred doing activities with same age peers. Contains five references. (DB)

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COMPARISON OF SOCIOMETRICALLY HIGH VISIBILITY REJECTED AND LOW VISIBILITY REJECTED CHILDREN ON TEACHER, PARENT, AND SELF-RATING MEASURES

Jonelle C. Neighbor
Academy School District Number 20

Mailing Address:
Pioneer Elementary
3663 Woodland Hills Drive
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80918

Doctoral Research for
The University of Texas at Austin
Supervising Professors: Cindy I. Carlson
Beeman N. Phillips

American Psychological Association
Division 16
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This study was designed to determine the differences between groups of children identified as high visibility rejected and low visibility rejected on a sociometric measure. Sociometric data were collected from 952 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students attending the public school district in St Cloud, Minnesota. Each child responded to six items on the Sociometric Questionnaire (selected from the Behavior Rating Profile, Brown and Hammill, 1978), listing names of children in their homeroom class whom they would most and least like to have as a friend, most and least like to play with at recess, and most and least like to invite home after school Each questionnaire yielded 9 positive nominations and 9 negative nominations.

Questionnaires from the 37 classrooms were analyzed to determine the number of positive and negative nominations from peers received by each child in every class. Based upon the number of nominations received, and whether there were more positive or negative nominations, children were characterized as high visibility rejected, low visibility rejected, or comparison group. High visibility rejected (HVR) children received many nominations, with the number of negative nominations outweighing the number of positive nominations Low visibility rejected (LVR) children received few peer nominations, with the number of negative nominations outweighing the number of positive nominations. Comparison (COM) children received at least twice as many positive nominations as negative nominations.

Information on comparison children was collected to determine if the data from this study were consistent with past sociometric research showing the differences between popular and rejected children. However, the central purpose of this study was to determine if there are differences between two groups of rejected children, distinguished by whether they received many or relatively few total nominations. It was hypothesized that, besides varying on social visibility, or the total number of nominations they received, children from each rejected group would vary on other dimensions such as preference for playing alone or with same age peers, self-ratings of peer relations, social skills, aggressiveness, conduct problems, and withdrawal.

Permission from parents for data collection to test the hypotheses was received for 49 high visibility rejected, 50 low visibility rejected,

and 58 comparison children. The 157 identified students indicated with whom they would prefer to do particular recreational activities (Peer Preference Test - Revised, Neighbor, 1984, 1985, adapted from Evers-Pasquale and Sherman, 1975), and how popular they thought they were (Peer questions of the Student Rating Scale of the Behavior Rating Profile, Brown and Hammill, 1978). Parents and teachers rated the students in each group on specific social skills (ACCEPTS Placement Test, Walker et al., 1983) and more general behaviors such as aggressiveness, conduct problems and withdrawal (Revised Behavior Problem Checklist, Quay and Peterson, 1983).

Numerous significant differences between both parent and teacher ratings of high visibility rejected and low visibility rejected students were evident from the data. There were significant differences between parent, teacher, and self-ratings of students when each rejected group was compared with the comparison group. These differences in most cases were quantitative (a matter of degree) rather than qualitative (groups showing distinct and unique characteristics). Specific hypotheses with a summary of related results follow.

1. Low visibility rejected children would more often prefer to do a variety of entertainment activities by themselves or with a grownup than would high visibility rejected children who would more often prefer doing those activities with someone of their own age.

Rather than showing different preferences and thus supporting Hypothesis 1, both low visibility rejected and high visibility rejected children preferred to do a variety of activities by themselves or with a grownup rather than with same age peers, as assessed by the Peer Preference Scale - Revised. Both groups of rejected children have likely experienced sufficient social difficulties by their upper elementary years that sharing activities with same age peers does not have the same appeal that it does for other children. Comparison children more often preferred doing the activities with someone of their own age and so differed from both the high visibility and low visibility rejected students.

2. High visibility rejected children would rate themselves as having lower peer status than would low visibility rejected children.

High visibility rejected children <u>did not</u> rate themselves as having lower peer status than did low visibility rejected children, as assessed by

the peer questions of the Student Rating Scale of the Behavior Rating Profile. Both groups did rate themselves as having significantly lower peer status than did comparison children. These children seem to realize that they are not popular; however, they do not reflect in their own self-ratings the degree of their rejection by peers. In the minds of children, rejection by peers seems to not be so much a matter of degree as an "all or nothing" proposition.

3. Parents of low visibility rejected children would rate them as having better social skills than would parents of high visibility rejected children.

This hypothesis was supported by parent responses to the ACCEPTS Placement Test. Both rejected groups were significantly different from each other in the direction predicted, and both groups were significantly lower than comparison children in social skill proficiency as rated by their parents. Apparently, social skills are on a continuum. Students in the comparison group had the best social skills, low visibility rejected children were next in performance as judged by their parents, and high visibility rejected children had the poorest social skills This suggests that the greater the rejection from peers as measured by a sociometric questionnaire, the greater the likelihood that social skills will be poor.

4. Teachers of low visibility rejected children would rate them as having better social skills than would teachers of high visibility rejected children.

As with parents, teachers of low visibility rejected children did rate them as having better social skills than did teachers of high visibility rejected children. Both groups were also significantly different from students in the comparison group. Comparison children had the best social skills, low visibility rejected students the next best, and high visibility rejected children the worst. The reasoning is the same as for differences in parent ratings

5. Parents of high visibility rejected children would rate them as being more aggressive and as having more conduct problems than would parents of low visibility rejected children.

Parents of high visibility rejected children <u>did not</u> rate them as being more aggressive than did parents of low visibility rejected children, as assessed by the Socialized Aggression subscale of the Revised Problem

Behavior Checklist. The behaviors rated in this subscale assess delinquency more than what we traditionally think of as aggression. Upper elementary children often do not have the opportunity to "belong to a gang," be "loyal to delinquent friends" or "be "truant form home " Despite the very limited range of aggression scores as rated by parents in all of the groups, parents of high visibility rejected children did rate them as having higher Socialized Aggression than did parents of children in the comparison group. It is quite notable that high visibility rejected children are significantly different from the comparison group because it means that they are already demonstrating some delinquent behaviors.

Parents of high visibility rejected children did rate them as having more conduct problems than did teachers of low visibility rejected children and teachers of comparison children, as assessed by the Conduct Disorder subscale of the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist. Low visibility rejected children also showed significantly more conduct problems than did comparison children. This subscale assesses behaviors more likely to occur in upper elementary students with problems.

6. Teachers of high visibility rejected children would rate them as being more aggressive and as having more conduct problems than would teachers of low visibility rejected children.

Teachers of high visibility rejected children did not significantly rate them as being more aggressive than did teachers of low visibility rejected children. There was a nonsignificant trend for high visibility rejected children to be more aggressive than comparison children. There were no significant differences between low visibility rejected and comparison students. Teachers of high visibility rejected children did rate them as having more conduct problems than did teachers of low visibility rejected children. Likewise, both rejected groups showed significantly higher scores from children in the comparison group.

7. Parents of low visibility rejected children would rate them as being more withdrawn than would parents of high visibility rejected children.

Parents of low visibility rejected children did not rate them as being more withdrawn than did parents of high visibility rejected children, as assessed by the Anxiety-Withdrawal subscale of the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist. There was only a trend in the results to suggest that high visibility rejected children were more withdrawn than

were low visibility rejected children. Both rejected groups clearly were rated as being more withdrawn than the comparison group.

8. Teachers of low visibility rejected children would rate them as being more withdrawn than would teachers of high visibility rejected children.

Teachers of low visibility rejected children did not rate them as being more withdrawn than did teachers of high visibility rejected children. In this case, the very opposite was true. High visibility rejected children turned out to be significantly more withdrawn than were low visibility rejected children. After a history of severe rejection by peers, they show a greater tendency to withdraw from social situations. Low visibility rejected as well as high visibility rejected children showed more withdrawal than the comparison children

To summarize the results of this study, there were no significant differences between the self-ratings of targeted students in the rejected groups. High visibility rejected students were generally rated as having poorer social skills, more conduct problems and more withdrawal than were low visibility rejected children and those in the comparison group. Furthermore, low visibility rejected students demonstrated more such social and behavioral problems than than did comparison students..

In applying the results of this study for determining interventions most appropriate for high visibility and low visibility rejected children, it is important to recognize that the significant differences between the two groups are a matter of degree and not the result of some unique configuration of characteristics which makes one group qualitatively different from the other. Since the two groups are not characteristically different, similar approaches may be used, but greater duration and intensity of intervention would be needed to effect changes in social skill performance for the high visibility rejected students. Children from that group have a greater degree of all of the maladaptive behaviors assessed, and thus need more intense intervention to close the social gap which separates them from children who have more peer acceptance.

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